

# CROSSROAD

Vol. No. 9, #1

May-June 1999



James Boggs  
May 28, 1937 - July 22, 1993

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## If Nobody Likes Bad Cops, Why Does the City Continue to Protect Them?

Complaints of police brutality carried out by members of the Chicago Police Department have become more prevalent in Chicago recently. The Office of Professional Standards routinely concludes that over 270 instances of police abuse are committed every year by the Chicago Police. Currently, the City of Chicago Corporation Counsel is in negotiations with the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) to construct a new collective bargaining agreement, the current contract expires June 30th of this year. The contract that the FOP currently has, and the new agreement that they are trying to obtain, covers much more than the standard wage and benefit protections that all workers deserve. *The FOP contract also guarantees certain privileges for officers accused or found guilty of police brutality.*

### FOP Contract Problem #1: Protected by Time

When a Chicago Police officer is accused of brutality or murder, days and often weeks pass before he/she is asked to make an official statement. (1) This allows the officer time to find out what other witnesses have said or what the forensics report states and provides the accused with information to construct a version of events that matches these reports. Civilians accused of a crime are questioned immediately, police officers should **not** be afforded these special privileges.

**The Answer: Police officers accused of brutality should be questioned immediately!**

Deaths or injuries in police custody should serve as a red flag to immediately initiate investigations. Accused officers should be prohibited from access to forensic reports, crime scene findings, and witness statements until they themselves have given a sworn statement. Don't allow delays to perpetuate the code of silence!

**FOP Contract Problem #2: Memory Loss**

Chicago Police officers that have charges of police brutality sustained against them have these incidents removed from their records after 1-5 years. The timing of this removal of past incidents from records is ensured by the FOP contract. (2) Instead of tracking brutal police officers and monitoring habitual offenders, the contract instead perpetuates brutal behavior by concealing it.

**The Answer: Track Brutal Police Officers and Fire Them!**

Instead of concealing past brutal behavior, monitor complaints so that repeat offenders can be fired or prosecuted. Keep records intact and allow them to be used in later investigations. Establish an early warning system, to recognize potentially brutal officers before the public pays the price. Don't let more examples of officers like Rex Hayes, at least a four-time repeat brutalizer, slip through the cracks that the FOP has widened. Officer Hayes, who is still on the job, has cost the City more than 3 million dollars in law suit settlements.

**Include Civilian Representation at all FOP Negotiations!**

The FOP has a right to fair wages and benefits, they do not have the right to protect brutal police officers at the expense of public safety. The solutions suggested here are just the beginning of a dialogue that community representatives must be included in. It's obvious that the Corporation Counsel, guided by the Mayor, has not taken the peoples' side on this issue; they have consistently allowed our protection from police abuse to be bargained away. Only by including civilian activists concerned with issues of police brutality in the FOP negotiation process can our interests be represented.

- *Don't bargain away civilian protection from police abuse!*
- *FOP contracts should serve and protect all Chicagoans!*
- *Call and let our side be heard. Tell the Mayor and the Corporation Counsel that We demand that community representatives be part of the FOP negotiation process! — Mayor Daley (312) 744-5000; Corporation Counsel - Labor Division (312) 744-5100*

For more information contact *Neighbors Against Police Brutality (NAPB)*, (773) 583-2753. NAPB was started in 1995 after a Humboldt Park man, Jorge Guillen, was killed by police. Guillen suffered from schizophrenia and his family had called 9-1-1 to have him taken to the hospital. Chicago police instead beat Guillen and asphyxiated him to death. Through our struggle for justice for Guillen We have learned that the problem of police brutality in Chicago is not simply a problem of "a few bad apples", the entire system of police accountability has to be changed. We honor Guillen's memory by continuing this struggle.

**Notes**

(1) The contract states that, "the interrogation of the officer, other than the initial stage of the investigation, shall be scheduled at a reasonable time" There is no further statement regarding the timing of the initial investigation. (pg 9) Officers required to make witness statements shall also have interviews "scheduled at a reasonable time," that "shall not be postponed more than forty-eight hours from the time the officer is informed of the request for an interview...interviews in shooting cases may be postponed for no more than two hours." (pg 14) There is no time limit stated for how long after a brutality incident has occurred that an official request for interviews must be made.

(2) The contract states, "A finding of sustained violation noted, no disciplinary action... may be used for a period of time not to exceed one year and shall thereafter be removed from the officer's disciplinary record and not used to support or as evidence of adverse employment action." (pg 19) "Unless the Superintendent of Police specifically authorizes in writing, no complaint or allegation of any misconduct concerning any incident or event which occurred five years prior... shall be reopened or re-investigated after five years." (pg 9)





## A Message From Innocent People Who Have Been Freed From Death Row

There are innocent men and women on death row in this country. We know, for we were numbered among them. Many of us endured for years in the narrow and isolated confines of a barren cell designed to murder our spirits, as the State struggled to win final legal sanction to steal our lives.

Such is the case with Mumia Abu-Jamal, an award-winning journalist, an outspoken opponent of racism and police brutality, a militant champion of justice for Black people, a man who for decades has been the voice of the dispossessed and the disenfranchised — and an innocent man on death row in Pennsylvania.

We know Mumia's struggle, because no-one knows better than we of the lengths to which the criminal "justice" system will go in its relentless quest to take a life. Many of us are intimately familiar with the daily degradation of Mumia's seventeen years on death row: locked in his cell for 23 hours each day, forbidden to embrace or even see his family members, prohibited from being filmed or audio taped by reporters, slapped into punitive detention for writing and publishing his views, refused the right to confidentially communicate with his attorneys. We were sustained in our struggle for justice, as Mumia is, by the tireless support of our families, friends, and people of principle who organized to liberate us from the machine that tried to slay us. Above all else we were sustained, as Mumia is, by the only real certainty we were allowed on death row — the knowledge that we were innocent.

The State sought to poison us, electrocute us or hang us with the machine-like indifference it reserves for people it has determined to be worthless and therefore disposable — in this country, overwhelmingly poor people and people of color. If our murders could be used to enhance a political career or a partisan policy debate, then so much the better. But the State seeks to murder Mumia with a ruthless and relentless fervor that has publicly defied any pretext of fairness or decency. Let us be clear: the State's campaign to murder Mumia is designed above all else to silence a Black man who dares to speak truth to power. As Mumia himself has said, the State does not seek just his death, it seeks his silence.

It is for these reasons that we call on all people of conscience to speak out, to organize against this travesty of justice, and to demand Mumia's freedom. To allow Pennsylvania to murder Mumia is to allow the State to slaughter another innocent and silence a voice for the voiceless. We know that the State will not concede its wrongdoing without a struggle. We know that the authorities who have sought to murder this man will not submit to justice unless we, the people, organize to fight the State's abuse of power. Join us. Stand with Mumia Abu-Jamal, our brother and our friend, and demand that the State of Pennsylvania set him free.

*Kirk Bloodworth* (Maryland, Convicted 1984, Released 1993)

*Ronald Kleine* (New Mexico, Convicted 1974, Released 1976)

*Joseph Burrows* (Illinois, Convicted 1989, Released 1994)

*Carl Lawson* (Illinois, Convicted 1990, Released 1996)

*Perry Cobb* (Illinois, Convicted 1979, Released 1987)

*Wilbert Lee* (Florida, Convicted 1963, Released 1975)

*Gary Gauger* (Illinois, Convicted 1993, Released 1996)

*Bradley P. Scott* (Florida, Convicted 1988, Released 1991)

*Muneer Deeb* (Texas, Convicted 1985, Released 1996)

*Verneal Jimerson* (Illinois, Convicted 1985, Released 1996)

*Delbert Tibbs* (Florida, Convicted 1974, Released 1977)

*Troy Lee Jones* (California, Convicted 1982, Released 1996)

*Darby (Williams) Tillis* (Illinois, Convicted 1979, Released 1987)

*David Keaton* (Florida, Convicted 1971, Released 1973)

*Dennis Williams* (Illinois, Convicted 1979, Released 1996)

**STOP  
THE  
DEATH  
PENALTY**



**CROSSROAD/SSP, Vol. 9, #1**  
**Why Hip Hop Is Dead**  
by Lethal Wonder

Hip Hop is dead. i don't care what anyone says, it has absolutely seen it's last days. There used to be a time that everyone would come out and relish in the fact that they had conquered new skills or discovered a new technique. Kids couldn't wait to drop a new style of rhyming on their peers. Hip Hop was about creativity and to a lesser degree having fun.

Today all that has changed. All these big willie and wanna be gangster types have ruined it. i know everyone is afraid to say it, but i will be straight up and honestly say, hardcore bangers like Suge Knight and his Death Row affiliates along with Fake Ass Puffy and his Biggie collective of friends have played a major role in killing off hip hop. They help usher in the dope game and the whole gangster mentality that now plagues this music. It was bad enough that you had kids from all over the planet trying to be like NWA or the Ghetto Boys. But now the gangster crap they spoke on records has become a frightening reality in the real world of hip hop.

When i go around my block, everyone i see aspires to be the next Gangster Don. Everyone wants to be like a Suge Knight and intimidate people. Everyone wants to be like a Sean Puffy Combs and get paid lots of money with no real concern for the art form they are ruining. Now alongside the Sugés and Puffys We have Master P and Jay Z, Fat Joe and Big Pun and Ice Cube and Mack 10 and Jermaine Dupri. These are supposed top Dons in hip hop. They all look and act like gangsters. Some of them even have a few dollars in the pocket. Unfortunately, it's chump change compared to the real big willies of the world.

i don't see Fat Joe owning a skyscraper in Manhattan. Master P may be the big money shot caller right now, but he still has to go through Priority Records to get distributed. That means the owner of Priority is the real money maker and not Master P. Suge for all his worth and intimidation tactics is still locked away in some jail cell in California. You would think that will all the crap he and his Death Row affiliates talked that they would have had the whole Justice system in check for real. i guess when it comes down to it, it's Uncle Sam who has the last word.

Ice Cube and Mack 10 change with the wind. One minute Cube is a Muslim talking all this Black Power and righteous shit. Now he's back to calling women bitches and hoes and pretending he's a gangster... For all the money that guys like Puffy, Jay-Z and Jermaine Dupri have you would think they would own some sort of tv station. Perhaps a cable access station would do. None of these big ballers own a radio station or even a magazine.

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Not one of them own the record companies that distribute their material. It sickens me to see these kids run around yelling 'money ain't a thing'. Some one needs to tell [them] 'money does mean a thing' if you don't own a goddamn thing. Instead of throwing away all those 20 dollar bills like they do in concert, maybe they should be stacking those dead presidents so they could save up and buy some stuff that they could own.

You would think that after 25 years of existence that hip hop would own something other than a bad reputation of violence-prone niggaz who pretend to be gangsters because they have a little bit of money in the pocket. Hip Hop is sadly misguided.

On the other side of the coin you have all these fake-ass 'underground', backpack wearing kids. They pride themselves on being broke and keeping it real, but like their hip hop gangster counterparts they too lack creativity. i would have to say guys like Mos Def and Talib Kweli (**Black Star**) have managed to shine through, but look at all these other kids who have fallen off in a big way. i don't need to name names. All you have to do is look around and you see these kids living in the underground bragging about how they are true to hip hop, but they have yet to step up and redirect the misguided flow of this beast. Hip Hop is lost and you definitely will not find it in the underground. All you will see is some buster ass rappers who will yell about how they are all about keeping it real. They will be sporting dreads even though they aren't Rastas. They'll have backpacks with nothing in them. They'll be chewing on a stick or smoking a blunt with a young impressionable white girl under their arm. The sad part is that young white girl will most likely have a lot more game than these underground cats. She's just using them as a momentary pit stop for experience while these underground busters run away from the challenge that is before them. That challenge is to take control and change the negative direction of hip hop.

Hip Hop is dead my friends. It's been overrun by gangsters and dope dealers and other unscrupulous motherfuckers who care nothing about the culture or the music. Hip Hop is dead because a bunch of motherfuckers stayed underground with their head in the sand. Hip Hop is dead.

(Lethal Wonder is a young man who has grown increasingly frustrated with Hip Hop in it's current form. He sent this piece to **Davey D's Hip Hop Corner**, which can be found on the web at <http://www.daveyd.com>. Responses can be sent to [kingdave@sirius.com](mailto:kingdave@sirius.com))





## Going Beyond Black and White

By Grace Lee Boggs  
Episcopal Diocese of Michigan  
Detroit, September 21, 1998

Some years ago I attended a series of workshops led by Jim Perkinson in a small attic room at the Church of the Messiah in which he shared what his Biblical studies had taught him about Jesus' role as the leader of a social movement of the poor and oppressed against an exploiting elite. I have always been grateful to Jim for enriching my understanding of Christianity through these workshops. Therefore, I was glad to accept John Hooper's invitation to join in this celebration of his receipt of a Ph.D. in Theology from the University of Chicago by responding to his presentation on "Getting to the Core of Racism: Privilege, Power and Possibility at the Millennium."

I don't know how John expected me to respond. But because my own experience has taught me that real education in social struggle only begins after you get your Ph.D., I have decided that I owe it to Jim to explain how my approach to racism, based on many years of life and struggle in the African American community, differs significantly from his.

This difference comes through most clearly in our contrasting views of James Forman's 1969 Black Manifesto which demanded a half billion dollars in reparations from white churches for black projects. According to Jim, Forman's striding down the aisle and interrupting the May 4, 1969 Sunday Service at Riverside Church with his Manifesto was "the seminal moment of the Civil Rights struggle," because it brought "the question home to its point of origin" and framed it "in the terms in which it has always mattered... the issue of economic indebtedness and return on investment."

By contrast, I was appalled by Forman's Black Manifesto. To me it signaled the beginning of the end of the black movement precisely because it framed the struggle against racism in these economic terms. I was present when Forman presented his demands to a caucus at the National Black Economic Development Conference at Wayne University and have described the scene in my autobiography, *Living For Change*. "When the demand for a half billion dollars was projected to the fifty or more people gathered in a relatively small room, the audience

gasped, eyes popped, and someone said, '\$15 a Nigger.' I was horrified - into my mind popped the lines from 'The White Man's Heaven is the Black Man's Hell,' that called putting a price on a man's body 'the world's most grievous sin.'"

The main reason why Blacks in this country have been pivotal to the struggle to humanize our society is because they never forgot that their oppression had been rooted in a system which was fundamentally corrupt because it elevated economic values over human values. It was precisely because the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s framed the struggle against racism in human and not economic terms, that it burgeoned into a wide-ranging movement with the potential to transform American society. Thus, even though the civil rights movement was against segregation, it was not for integration into the values and institutions of this society. In the early days of the movement, black people used to say, "Who would want to be integrated into a burning house!" It was only as the struggle gained momentum that the economic and opportunistic values of the system began to penetrate and corrupt the movement. Instead of struggling to transform the society, blacks began to covet a piece of the economic and political action.

This contradiction came to a head in the rebellions which began to erupt in northern cities in the middle 1960s. On the one hand, the young people who rose up in rebellion in Watts, Newark, Detroit and 100 cities across the nation were challenging the values of a racist society which was using Hi-Tech to destroy a small nation in Southeast Asia and to make them expendable at home. On the other, they were looting and carting away cartons of TVs, guns and liquor as if freedom could be measured in consumer goods.

This contradiction and this street force, now called the underclass, have been growing since the 1960s. It achieved organized form in the Black Panther Party which struggled valiantly to develop a revolutionary solution. It exploded again in southcentral Los Angeles in the spring of 1992 over the Rodney King verdict.

Like most of us who lived through the rebellions, Martin Luther King was deeply troubled by this contradiction and in the last two years of his life struggled to develop a vision of a new kind of movement to resolve it. As a result, he realized that



it was no longer sufficient to struggle only against racism. What we now need, he said, was a non-violent revolution which would combine a revolution in values, against what he called the "giant triplets" of racism, materialism and militarism, with a revolution against the structures that doom millions to poverty and powerlessness. Recognizing the need to go beyond technological progress ("we have guided missiles and misguided men"), he struggled to envision a system that would go beyond both capitalism (which he said was too "I-centered, too individualistic, too thing-oriented") and communism (which was "too collective, too statist"). Recognizing also that young blacks only made a historic contribution when they "threw off their middle class values and put careers and wealth in a secondary role," he explored strategies that would involve young people in "direct self-transforming and structure-transforming" actions in "our dying cities."

Towards the end of his life King was not talking about integration - let alone reparations. No longer willing to separate out the struggle against racism from the struggle against materialism and militarism, he was talking about transformation, the transformation in both structures and in values that all of us in this society, including African Americans, increasingly need to undergo. King was killed before he could develop and implement his vision, but today, thirty years later, we should be building on his projections rather than on Forman's Black Manifesto.

I also have serious questions about Jim's conclusion. In the last paragraph of the draft which he sent me, he recommends that "at this millennial moment in North American history," we should "learn to follow a Jesus who, as surely as he was Jewish in first century Palestine, is black in contemporary North America." Implicit in that recommendation is a black-white dynamic that has outlived its usefulness but that persists in many concerned individuals of Jim's generation, black and white, whose identities have been shaped by the struggles of the 1960s. That dynamic, I am convinced, is now intrinsically unhealthy because it

- involves an uncritical acceptance of black male leadership by whites, especially white males, on the one hand, and on the other, an uncritical assumption by blacks, especially black males,

that they are the vanguard of the American revolution.

- glosses over the many conflicting tendencies in black leadership which are multiplying along with the growing gulf between the black middle class and the black underclass.
- reinforces some of the major weaknesses of most black leaders, especially the resistance to criticism and self-criticism and the continuing use of disabling myths on the grounds that they are needed by the masses who have been cruelly oppressed by white racism. For a critical look at these weaknesses I recommend *Joe Wood's Malcolm X: In Our Own Image* (St. Martins Press, 1992), especially the essays criticizing Malcolm's sexism by Angela Davis and Patricia Hill Collins and an insightful analysis by Marlon Riggs of why young blacks identify with Malcolm - because he is "the quintessential icon of black rage" and of "death as the inevitable price one gives to be free."
- blinds us to the tremendous changes that have taken place since the 1960s, changes that have created new contradictions and new complexities, challenging us to make a tremendous leap in our concepts of struggle and possibilities and in the words of Angela Davis, to "rethink and reshape the contours of our political activism." ("*Meditations on the Legacy of Malcolm X*" in *Malcolm X: In Our Own Image*, ed. Joe Wood, p. 46.

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge in the last thirty years.

In the first place, even though the movement of the 1960s did not end racism, it integrated blacks into the values of the system as they had never been before.

Second, since the 1960s there has been a tremendous influx of Latinos, Asians and people from the Middle East so that it is widely estimated that by the middle of the next century, Euro-Americans and African Americans will be among the many minorities that make up the American majority.

Third, the devastation of our cities and our



communities by global capitalism has increased the hopelessness and desperation of young people in our inner cities, but it is also giving rise to a new multicultural grassroots movement to rebuild our communities and our cities from the ground up. As a result, the time has come for us to make a paradigm shift, i.e., to go beyond thinking and talking in terms of the black/white struggle and to explore how we can empower young people in our cities by engaging them in this new movement.

The best example of what I mean is this document which presents the *17 Principles of Environmental Justice* adopted at the **First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit** in October 1991 by a gathering of African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans. It is a multicultural, multinational Manifesto which establishes the foundation for a new movement, based on a new more holistic concept of citizenship, to take us into the 21st century.

For example, Principle No. 3 "mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living beings."

Principle No. 7 "demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation."

Principle No. 14 "opposes the destructive operations of multinational corporations."

Principle No. 17 "requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible, and make a conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our life-styles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations."

I would like to conclude with a story from the Black Radical Congress told me by General Baker, one of the founders of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. As some of you may have heard, the highlight of this Congress, which convened in Chicago in June, was the intergenerational dialogue pairing activists from the 1960s, including General, Kathleen Cleaver, Barbara Smith, Ahmad Rahmann and Angela Davis, with student activists of today. At the end of his dialogue, General asked the young woman he was interviewing what message she could give him to take back to his five children and eight grandchildren. Her reply was that "Anger will get you only so far; beyond that you have to depend on Love."

I haven't been able to get out of my mind these words from a young woman who has grown up surrounded by the just anger of her peers, the anger which exploded in the rebellions of the 1960s and has continued to fester and manifest itself in the violence of young people against themselves and others. This anger is not going to be assuaged by reparations. Or, as Audre Lorde put it, you cannot dismantle the house of the master with the tools of the master. Our challenge is to build a movement based on "self-transforming and structure-transforming" activities that foster their love for themselves, for their communities and for Mother Earth by giving them opportunities to make a difference.

For example, we can organize and support programs like DETROIT SUMMER, "a multicultural intergenerational youth program/movement to rebuild, redefine and respirit Detroit from the ground up," which recently completed its seventh season. Or, as the *Michigan Citizen* advocates in this week's editorial, we can begin to address the crisis in our schools and in our cities by making community-building activities a natural and normal part of the school curriculum. Thus, "classrooms from K-12 could take responsibility for planting community gardens, maintaining neighborhood streets, rehabbing houses, recycling waste, creating healthier school lunches, etc. Including these activities in the curriculum would give every child a stake in our communities and our cities. It would give children an incentive to study and an opportunity to learn the basics in a context that matters. At the same time, by making use of youthful energies, it would go a long way towards reversing the physical deterioration of our neighborhoods and establishing positive relations between young people and adults."

These are the kinds of activities we need to be initiating and supporting now to bring to our communities the Hope and Love needed to replace the sense of hopelessness, helplessness and desperation that has been mounting for the last thirty years. Through engaging our children in activities of this kind we can begin to transform ourselves and our cities to create the new, more holistic concept of citizenship that we urgently need as we move towards the 21st century.

*Grace Lee Boggs is a first-generation Chinese American who has been a speaker, writer, and movement activist in the African American community for fifty-five years. She has lived on the East Side of Detroit since 1953, most of that time in the same house. With her husband, James Boggs, she coauthored Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century. Currently, as a volunteer, she is active with Healthy Detroit, Detroit Summer, Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice, and the Detroit Growers Support Group. She can be contacted through the James & Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership (BCNCL), 3061 Field Street, Detroit MI 48214; (313) 832-2904.*

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**What is the Jubilee 2000/Chicago Campaign?**

*In the Jubilee Year, social inequalities are rectified; slaves are freed, land is returned to original owners, and debts are cancelled.*

Jubilee 2000 Chicago is a local Jubilee 2000/USA group. It is part of a worldwide movement of concerned people and organizations seeking, as a first step, to have the international debts of the poorest countries cancelled by the new millennium.

**Why is debt a problem for poor countries?**

In order to repay foreign debts, many poor countries are being forced to divert scarce government resources away from health care, education, and other vital services. The result has been to deny many children the chance to go to school, women access to prenatal care, HIV-infected persons access to counseling and treatment, and small farmers access to credit and technical assistance. African countries now spend twice as much on average repaying foreign debt as on providing health care. In a letter sent to President Clinton in February 1998, the Ugandan Women's Network noted that, "Ugandan women have suffered the brunt of debt repayment and they continue to pay with their lives." The United Nations Development Program in 1997 stated, "Relieved of their annual debt repayments, the severely indebted countries could use the funds for investments in Africa alone [that] would save the lives of about 21 million children by 2000 and provide 90 million girls and women with access to basic education."

**How much do these countries owe?**

The 41 countries defined by the World Bank as "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries" (HIPC) - 33 of them in Africa - owe about \$220 billion in foreign debts. Each African child inherits about \$379 in debt at birth. A child in Nicaragua is born owing over \$2000 while average yearly income there is only \$390. The US is also a major debtor nation, but unlike these poor countries its debt is not primarily foreign debt - it is payable to in its own currency, US dollars. Also the payments are manageable because of the size of the productivity of the US economy. *How did these countries get so indebted? Isn't it their own fault?*

- During the Cold War, Western governments including the US often lent money to undemocratic or corrupt governments for political reasons and largely ignored how the borrowers used the money. Many leaders squandered money on badly designed projects, military spending or personal corruption.
- While some poor countries have suffered from ad-

verse weather and armed conflicts, virtually all have endured long term declines in world prices for their primary exports (e.g., items like coffee or cotton). As export earnings dropped, governments could no longer keep up interest payments which were added to the unpaid principal of the debt. This compounding of interest and rescheduling of loans has led to situations in many countries where, despite years of making debt payments, the level of indebtedness has not been reduced. Indeed for many countries the debt is higher now than ever.

**To whom do Poor countries owe money?**

The main creditors are the world's wealthiest nations, such as the US, Britain, Japan, France and Germany. Other important creditors include the large international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which are controlled primarily by the world's wealthiest nations. Regional development banks, such as the Inter-American Development Bank, and many commercial banks also have outstanding loans to poor nations.

**Why should US citizens care? How does it affect us?**

- Unrepayable debt, and the austerity measures that accompany new loans, can inflame social conflicts. That can lead to civil war and even genocidal campaigns, as in Rwanda. Many of these conflicts result in costly humanitarian interventions by the US and other nations.
- A large debt burden motivates many poor countries to lower labor standards, as they engage in a desperate struggle to attract foreign investments and thereby earn revenues to repay foreign debt. That leads to lower wages and growing poverty around the world - and less job security in the US. American jobs are less secure when US companies seeking to pay lower wages relocate overseas.
- Debt harms the environment, encouraging rain forest destruction and pollution as poor countries use cheap but environmentally destructive ways to earn export revenues. To attract foreign investment to help pay the debt, countries often weaken enforcement of international and national environmental standards and regulations.
- Countries with major debt burdens generally are not good customers for US products or investment. As the Ugandan Women's Network noted, unrepayable debt "discourages foreign direct investment, affects commerce, stifles consumption and development of markets." That hurts US farmers, workers and businesses, as well as the people in poor, indebted countries.



**Is debt cancellation really practical?**

Most poor countries have tried very hard to repay these debts. In 1996 nations in sub-Saharan Africa paid \$14.5 billion on their foreign debt. But in 1995, they could only pay 57% of payments due. The reality is that the debt cannot and will not be repaid, and it is senseless for creditors to pretend otherwise. Countries cannot develop healthy economies when millions of their people are being denied basic health care and education and earn wages so low they can barely survive. A bold step to cancel poor countries' debts is the most practical way to restart their economies, protect the global environment and reduce poverty.

**Who has the power to cancel these debts?**

Governments of the wealthiest nations, including the US, have the authority to cancel debts. They can provide financial resources to international agencies like the IMF and the World Bank and direct that the funds be used to write off poor countries' debts. They should require, however, that the debt be canceled in a way that benefits ordinary people and without conditions that lead to more poverty and environmental destruction.

[The US] government and others together have the power, and the resources, to do it: the only thing missing is the political will. That must come from people like you.

**Has debt cancellation ever been tried before?**

Yes. Debt has readily been canceled for many nations in the past. In 1953, Germany was granted very generous repayment terms on its post war international debt. That helped Germany rebuild after the war. In 1991, the US canceled \$7 billion owed by Egypt. From 1989-1991, the US also canceled \$2.7 billion in debts owed by the poorest countries accrued through development and food aid loans. All of these cancellations occurred without doing damage to the US or global economy. Some countries are taking bold steps on the issue: Norway recently announced plans to unilaterally cancel \$180 million in poor country debt.

**Won't debt cancellation cost a lot?**

Because the world financial community knows full well that the official amount ("face value") of these debts will never be repaid, the market value of the debts is only a fraction of that amount. The contributions needed from wealthy nations to write off these debts would be based on this market value and, therefore, be relatively small. Haiti's foreign debt is a good example. Even though the official value of Haiti's debt to the US government was \$8.3 million, canceling it in 1995 cost only the debt's market value of \$377,000.

**Won't debt cancellation just benefit corrupt leaders rather than help ordinary people?**

While corruption remains a problem in many

places, a growing number of poor countries have more democratic governments and active civil groups and non-governmental organizations working to hold these governments accountable. Inaction is no solution. That penalizes ordinary people, not the corrupt leaders. The real challenge is to ensure that the resources made available from debt relief are used for reducing poverty. A key part of this process will be making sure civil society in poor countries plays a role in deciding how national economic resources are spent and in setting conditions for future loans.

**Is the Campaign only for faith-based groups?**

No. The Campaign was inspired by the Biblical concept of "jubilee" found in Leviticus 25: every 50 years all debts were to be canceled, land returned to its original owners and the oppressed set free. But member organizations include a broad range of both religious and secular groups who share a moral commitment to ensuring a debt-free new start for the world's poorest nations. The US Steering Committee includes national religious organizations, environmental and development groups and social justice organizations (a list is available). The Chicago campaign has a similar mixture of religious and secular groups.

**What can we do?**

You can make a difference by getting involved in the campaign. Jubilee 2000 resolutions from city councils, state legislatures and faith groups; letters to the editor, calls to radio and TV talk shows; visits to your elected members of congress; prayer vigils and other actions - all these can help build a chorus of concern that will force policy makers in Washington to address this issue. We can win this campaign! You can make a difference!

**Start today! The millenium is just around the corner.**

- Call a meeting of interested people in your church and/or community to discuss and take action.
- Distribute the Jubilee 2000 petition in your faith community, union local, school, or service club.
- Write opinion pieces and letters to the editor of your local paper; organize a public forum on Jubilee 2000.
- Organize a visit to the local office of your congressional representative. Raise your concern for debt relief for impoverished countries at town meetings held by your representative or at candidate forums.

To learn more about the Jubilee 2000/USA campaign call (202) 783-3566. Also, check out the website at <http://www.j2000usa.org>

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## Book Review:

**Prisoners of Colonialism: The Struggle****For Justice In Puerto Rico**

by Ronald Fernandez

(Common Courage Press: Monroe, Maine)

On Friday, March 12, Jose Solis Jordan was found guilty of bombing a military recruiting center in Chicago in 1992, solely on the evidence of police informant, Rafael Marrero, who had admitted to his own role in the bombing in order to receive immunity from prosecution. For anyone with even the slightest knowledge of Puerto Rico's 100-year struggle against US colonialism, this bombing has the smell of agent provocateurs and the FBI dirty tricks of J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO program of the 1960s. With that program, the FBI used informants to disrupt the activities of the Independence Movement by exacerbating existing friction to help bring about factional splits. If we look at the recent trial of Jose Solis Jordan in the light of this history, we can see it as an attempt to divide the Puerto Rican Independence Movement in Chicago and disrupt the work of the "National Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners" and divert it from its goal of winning amnesty for the prisoners.

It is this demand for amnesty and its historical context that is Ronald Fernandez's brief in his book. It's written with the purpose of informing people in the US about the unacceptable colonial status of Puerto Rico and the injustice and violation of human rights evident in the length of sentences and appalling conditions of the incarcerated Independence Movement prisoners. Fernandez has set himself a very difficult task. How can you begin to explain colonialism to an audience for whom the word is merely an irrelevant abstraction — something the British did in Africa? Possibly, it is even more difficult than that. Cynicism and "double-think" leads people in the US to hold contradictory opinions that negate each other.

In the early 1980s, I asked someone to sign a petition to support the demands of an Irish political prisoner on hunger strike in a US federal prison. The explanation for his refusal to sign contained this revealing contradiction: that the US was the only free country in the world; but that he wouldn't sign the petition because the FBI might find out and tap his telephone. This attitude affects us all. If we are ruled

by unethical cynics who claim to be acting altruistically and in the best interest of the people they invade and exploit then we, too, become infected with the same arrogance, indifference and contradictory thinking. We can easily be led to believe that the US has no colonies, while at the same time recognizing that illegal wire tapping and police brutality are common occurrences here. *Prisoners of Colonialism* presents us with a gripping and very readable account of the last 100 years in which the US government's dealings with Puerto Rico have been consistent in this one respect: what a succession of administrations have said publicly that they are doing is the absolute reverse of what they actually have done.

"On July 25, 1898, General Nelson Miles invaded Puerto Rico... he declared martial law, silenced the press..." and three days later presented his message to the Puerto Rican people: "We have not come to make war upon the people of a country that for centuries has been oppressed, but, on the contrary, to bring protection... to promote your prosperity and to bestow upon you the immunities and [blessing] of the liberal institution of our government." After two years of repressive military rule, the Puerto Rican people asked Congress for an immediate "redress of grievances." Congress responded with the Foraker Act. Now, "Puerto Rico was not only a colony, it was the first unincorporated territory in US history." Meaning that there was no promise of future statehood.

This duplicity continued with an enforced "citizenship" in 1917 against the will of the people. This was a special kind of citizenship, since it came without rights or representation. Puerto Ricans could then be drafted into the military by a government they couldn't vote for. In the name of economic development, Congress introduced a tax exempt "incentive for outside investment to establish factories that would put Puerto Rico to work." But since corporations could only bring their tax free profits home after liquidation, "new businesses only replaced the ones closing shop after a 'let's take the money and run' liquidation." In the name of economic development, Puerto Rico's economy was destroyed, leading to the enforced exile of thousands of Puerto Ricans who had to seek work in New York and Chicago.

While Fernandez is very clear and informative on the manipulation and duplicity inherent in the US government's rule in Puerto Rico, it is the history



of resistance to this rule, from Pedro Albizu Campos in the 1940s to Oscar Lopez Rivera in the 1980s, that is at the center of the book. "International law (e.g., UN General Assembly Resolution 33/24 of December 1978) recognizes "... the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial domination, particularly armed struggle." If the legitimacy of armed struggle to end colonization is enshrined in international law, then why, asks Fernandez, are there 20 Puerto Ricans serving an average of 70 years for simply exercising this right?

One reason lies in the US government's continued ability to prevail on friends and allies to ensure that any mention of Puerto Rico is deleted from the UN Decolonization Committee Report. Another reason is the constant emotive use of the word "terrorism." On "terrorism," Fernandez states: "It is hypocritical and inaccurate for US officials to call Puerto Rican political prisoners 'terrorists.' If the essential feature of modern terrorism is the severing of the link between the target of violence and the reason for the violence, the origin of modern terrorism is in the military establishment of England, Italy and the United States. It was Western soldiers who argued that the way to win World War II was to destroy 'the enemy's will to resist.' In practice, this included 'paralyzing the organic industrial, economic and civic systems that maintained the life of the enemy nation itself,' and this included 'attacking the people themselves, especially those concentrated in the cities.' This was openly called 'obliteration bombing' because the deliberate idea was to systematically terrorize the civilian population. The thinking is that exposed to bombardment from thousands of planes, people would surrender rather than live under a fiery barrage. After WWII, obliteration bombing became an institutionalized part of American life." Fernandez goes on to point out that "obliteration bombing was an essential part of President Bush's Desert Storm campaign in Iraq. The American public even watched the 'live action' footage on CNN; meanwhile, many of the Baghdad civilians deliberately killed by US bombardment not only had nothing to do with the reason for the war, they were opponents of Saddam Hussein."

Having defined terrorism and pointed out its consistent use as a tactic of the US military since WWII, Fernandez turns his attention to the bombings

of the FALN, the armed movement for Puerto Rican Independence. By 1981, the FALN had assumed responsibility for 120 separate bombings in which a total of 5 people had been killed. "The bombings were generally 'symbolic', they focused on property." All five deaths had occurred accidentally. Nevertheless, the FALN was labeled a terrorist organization, because to have called it "revolutionary" would have been to confront the unacceptable truth of the illegitimacy of US rule and the legitimacy of an armed struggle to overthrow that rule. As one of the prisoners, Oscar Lopez, stated: "The evidence will show you that We have a deep respect for human life, that We care for human life." To Oscar, the proof was in the result of the bombings: how could the FALN violence be characterized as "indiscriminate" if, in 120 bombings, "very few people have died? Obviously, when it attacked banks, recruiting centers or military installations, the FALN could have slaughtered people if it chose to do so."

Maybe the most revealing aspect of this book is that it shows the exemplary ethics, self-sacrifice and integrity of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners. In contrast, the individuals of successive US governments have shown the very opposite traits: in place of exemplary ethics, We have immorality; for self-sacrifice, We see the pursuit of profit and personal gain; and for integrity, there is only treachery and lies. The hard fact for us is that so many independentistas remain in jail.

Fernandez ends his book with this statement: "The contradiction is ours. The United States owns the colony. The prisoners did their duty, and the President should immediately free them, not only for the sake of justice, but for the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence."

(reviewed by *Bertha Husband*; reprinted from *Lumpen*, April 1999)





## Controversy Surrounding the Film 'Belly'

In case you don't know there's been a bit of controversy surrounding the new movie 'Belly' which features Method Man, DMX, Nas and T-Boz of the group TLC. Long time video director Hype Williams takes his craft to the big screen by directing a New York style film of *Boyz In The Hood* and *Menace II Society*. The movie is about life in the fast lane for a group of guys and how they evolve. Some of them wind up going to jail. Some of them get killed and others figure it out — life in the fast lane leads to dead ends.

Hype attempts to put a serious message behind all the mayhem that gets shown on the screen. i won't go into great detail about it because i don't wanna ruin the plot in case y'all haven't seen it. One of the big questions at hand is whether or not folks who have seen the flick walked away peepin' the message that Hype was trying to lace them with. Incidentally, Hype not only directs this flick, but he also wrote the screenplay.

Now i spoke to Hype the other day and he emphatically claimed that he's been walking the streets and talking to movie goers and that most are really feeling him on this movie. He said he wanted to do a movie that was based around the type of lifestyles that were led by many of the folks he grew up with. He wanted to show the consequences of their wise and unwise choices and he wanted to put forth characters that viewers could relate to. DMX and Nas who are the main characters deliver some pretty good performances considering it's really their first time on the screen. And i think folks will find them compelling and quite believable. Folks can't help but try and compare hip hop's newest rebel DMX with the late 2PAC. Hype explained that he can see the similarities in both since he has worked with both. However, he feels that DMX is like a raging bull in exuding his emotions and is in fact actually more intense than 2PAC. Me personally, i think they both have their own styles, and both have a menacing presence on screen.

With all that being said, does Hype manage to hit the mark and deliver his message? Former basketball player and current movie theater owner Magic Johnson wasn't quite sure and hence wasn't willing to take a chance. He set off a firestorm of controversy

by refusing to allow the movie to be shown in his theaters. His initial concern was that he was tired of seeing "African Americans" depicted in such a negative light. He also feared that the movie had the potential to set off disruptions and violence. Word of Magic's position had gotten back to Hype before Magic could directly speak with him and folks from Hype's camp was saying the young film director was annoyed.

The public perception of things were divided. On one hand, you had people applauding Magic for taking a bold stance and putting his foot down. On the other hand, you had folks accusing Magic of censorship and bowing down to outside forces who were supposedly controlling his purse strings. The harshest criticisms accused Magic of selling out because he wasn't supporting a "Black" business.

Lee Bailey of the EUR Report [<http://www.eurweb.com>] caught up with Magic Johnson and got things clarified in an exclusive interview: "I'm in gang territory already. You have to realize that. Right now everything is going great. I'm not saying the film would have caused problems, but I'm trying to make sure it doesn't trigger any problems in our neighborhoods." Magic went on to add, "Hollywood told us our idea would not work, but we've been doing this for 4 years. Now when I make a decision like this it's made into a big news story. Theaters make decisions like this all the time. But when I do it, it's a big deal. If violence would have broken out at my theater the story would have been front page."

In my interview with Hype Williams he noted that he understood where Magic was coming from and wanted to set the record straight about his feelings. He stated that he wasn't angry or annoyed, just a bit disappointed. i shared with Hype my personal observations of reaction to his movie. At the Grand Lake Theater which is one of the nicer theaters here in Oakland, the 10 o'clock showing was not publicized in either of the newspapers or the 777-FILM, show time line. This was being done in spite of the fact that there was actually a 10 o'clock show. When i arrived at the theater there was a police car parked outside and two of Oakland's finest sitting inside the theater.

According to one of the ushers, the movie had a violent weekend at that particular theater. Brothers



were showing up drunk or high. People were lighting up blunts inside the theater and being totally disruptive by talking loud, setting off pagers, etc. On two of the nights big fights broke out inside the theater. Hence the police presence. Even with the police on hand and less than 20 people for the show i attended, there was some loud mouth sitting in the back trying to outdo DMX and Nas' performances. This knuckle head was soon silenced, so i can only imagine that 5-0 had stepped to him and made him chill.

i informed Hype of my experiences and told him i could see where Magic was coming from. Hype seemed a bit resigned and noted that there's got to be a way for us to reach some of these individuals who seem bent on behaving destructively. He asked Bay Area listeners to be cool and noted that bad behavior will serve as fuel for those who want to prevent these type of films from being made. Hype also acknowledged that he was in a catch-22 situation because these are the type of films that are appealing to people and the fact that he did indeed have a compelling message made it that much more important. However, if folks aren't gonna respect themselves or the film enough to sit through the movie and take everything in, then it's really going to leave a bad taste in everyone's mouth.

i get the feeling that so many of us have grown up and have just simply become addicted to foul situations. It's like We can't and really don't wanna escape the ghetto mentality which has become a marketable money making commodity right now. i watch how there's been all this publicity behind *Belly* and very little surrounding the excellent movie *SLAM*, which also deals with life in the hood. In *SLAM*, the messages are more pervasive. There is very little glamorizing of the fast life. Why is it that all the positive stuff seems to be downplayed? It's not like they were preaching at you; and even if they were, so what? What's wrong with having some positive stuff in our lives?

For what it's worth although i think Hype had good intentions, i honestly believe that far too many kids feel like their lives are meaningless and that they are gonna pass away before they reach 25 or 30. Hence many have adapted this kamikazee-type of mindset of 'get as much as I can while I'm alive to get it.' Dying in the fast life is equivalent to dying in the line of duty. Maybe that's why so many of us watched this movie 'Belly' and never got the underlying message. Who knows? Let me know what you think.

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The struggle of Afrikans in the US to regain their independence has always been characterized by two major trends. One trend has struggled against racial discrimination and for equal participation in US society, accepting capitalist hegemony. The other trend has struggled against their national oppression by the US, and to establish an independent, socialist state.

The existence of these trends is a matter of historical record. Despite the efforts of the US to suppress the struggle for Afrikan independence, the movement has a strong contemporary expression among all sectors of the Afrikan population, especially among Afrikan youth. A recent study conducted among Afrikan college students by Professor Luke Tripp showed that 34 percent of the students favored an independent Afrikan state.

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## A Brief History of the Black Panther Party and Its Place In the Black Liberation Movement\*

By Sundiata Acoli

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was founded in October, 1966, in Oakland, California by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. The name was shortened to the Black Panther Party (BPP) and it began spreading eastward through the Black urban ghetto-colonies across country.

In the summer of '68, David Brothers established a BPP branch in Brooklyn, New York, and a few months later Lumumba Shakur set up a branch in Harlem, New York. I joined the Harlem BPP in the fall of '68 and served as its Finance Officer until I was arrested on April 2, 1969 in the Panther 21 Conspiracy case which was the opening shot in the government's nationwide attack on the BPP. Moving westward, Police Departments in each city made military raids on BPP offices or homes in Philadelphia, Chicago, Newark, Omaha, Denver, New Haven, San Diego, Los Angeles, and other cities, murdering some Panthers and arresting others.

After I and most other Panther 21 members were held in jail and on trial for two years, We were all acquitted of all charges and released. Most of us returned to the community and to the BPP but by then COINTELPRO had taken its toll. The BPP was rife with dissension, both internal and external. The internal strife, division, intrigue, and paranoia had become so ingrained that eventually most members drifted or were driven away. Some continued the struggle on other fronts and some basically cooled out altogether. The BPP limped on for several more years, then died what seemed a natural death.

History will be the ultimate judge of the BPP's place in the Black Liberation Movement (BLM). But in these troubled times Afrikan people in the U.S. need to investigate both the positive and negative aspects of the BPP's history in order to learn from those hard lessons already paid for in blood. In particular We need to learn the reasons for the BPP's rapid rise to prominence, the reason for its ability to move so many Afrikans and other nationalities, and the reason for its demise during its brief sojourn across the American scene. It's not possible in this short paper, on short notice, to provide much of what is necessary, so this paper will confine itself to pointing out some of the broader aspects of the BPP's positive and negative contributions to the BLM.

### The Positive Aspects of the BPP's Contributions

1) Self-Defense: This is one of the fundamental areas in which the BPP contributed to the BLM. It's also one of the fundamental things that set the BPP apart from most previous Black organizations and which attracted members (particularly the youth), mass support, and a mass following. The concept is not only sound, it's also common sense. But it must be implemented correctly, otherwise it can prove more detrimental than beneficial. The self-defense policies of the BPP need to be analyzed in this light by present day Afrikan organizations. All history has shown that this government will bring its police and military powers to bear on any group which truly seeks to free Afrikan people. Any Black "freedom" organization which ignores self-defense does so at its own peril.

2) Revolutionary Nationalist Ideology: The BPP was a nationalist organization. Its main goal was the national liberation of Afrikan people in the U.S., and it restricted its membership to Blacks only. It was also revolutionary. The BPP theories and practices were

based on socialist principles. It was anti-capitalist and struggled for a socialist revolution of U.S. society.

On the national level, the BPP widely disseminated socialist based programs to the Afrikan masses. Internationally, it provided Afrikans in the U.S. with a broader understanding of our relationship to the Afrikan continent, the emerging independent Afrikan nations, Third World nations, Socialist nations, and all the Liberation Movements associated with these nations. Overall the ideology provided Afrikans here with a more concrete way of looking at and analyzing the world. Heretofore much of Black analysis of the world, and the society in which We live, was based on making ourselves acceptable to White society, proving to Whites that We were human, proving to Whites that We were ready for equality, proving We were equal to Whites, disproving racist ideas held by Whites, struggling for integration or equal status with Whites, theories of "loving the enemy", "hating the enemy", "they're all devils", spookism, and other fuzzy images of how the real world worked.

3) Mass Organizing Techniques: Another fundamental thing that attracted members and mass support to the BPP was its policy of "serving the people". This was a policy of going to the masses, living among them, sharing their burdens, and organizing the masses to implement their own solutions to the day to day problems that were of great concern to them.

By organizing and implementing the desires of the masses, the BPP organized community programs ranging from free breakfast for children, to free health clinics, to rent strikes resulting in tenant ownership of their buildings, to Liberation School for grade-schoolers, to free clothing drives, to campaigns for community control of schools, community control of police, and campaigns to stop drugs, crime, and police murder and brutality in the various Black colonies across America. For these reasons, and others, the influence of the BPP spread far beyond its actual membership. Not only did the BPP programs teach self-reliance, but years later the government established similar programs such as free school lunch, expanded Medicare and day care facilities, and liberalized court procedures for tenant takeovers of poorly maintained housing, partly if not primarily in order to snuff out the memory of previous similar BPP programs and the principle of self-reliance.

4) Practice of Women's Equality: Another positive contribution of the BPP was its advocacy and practice of equality for women throughout all levels of the organization and in society itself. This occurred at a time when most Black Nationalist organizations were demanding that the woman's role be in the home and/or one step behind the Black man, and at a time when the whole country was going through a great debate on the woman's liberation issue.

5) Propaganda Techniques: The BPP made significant contributions to the art of propaganda. It was very adept at spreading its message and ideas through its newspaper The Black Panther, mass rallies, speaking tours, slogans, posters, leaflets, cartoons, buttons, symbols (i.e., the clenched fist), graffiti, political trials, and even funerals. The BPP also spread its ideas through very skillful use of the establishment's t.v., radio, and print media.

One singular indication, although there are others, of the effectiveness of BPP propaganda techniques is that even today, over a decade later, a large part of the programs shown on t.v. are still "police stories" and many of the roles available to Black actors are limited to police roles. A lot of this has to do with the overall process of still trying to rehabilitate the image of the police from its devastating exposure during the Panther era, and to prevent the true role of the police in this society from being exposed again.



## The Negative Aspects of the BPP Contributions

1) Leadership Corrupted: COINTELPRO eventually intimidated and corrupted all three of the BPP's top leaders: Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale and Eldridge Cleaver. Each, in their own way, caved in to the pressures and began acting in a manner that was deliberately designed to destroy the BPP, and to disillusion not only Party members but Afrikan people in America for years to come. COINTELPRO's hopes were that Afrikans in America would be so disillusioned that never again would they trust or follow any Afrikan leader or organization which advocated real solutions to Black oppression.

2) Combined Above and Underground: This was the most serious structural flaw in the BPP. Party members who functioned openly in the BPP offices, or organized openly in the community, by day might very well have been the same people who carried out armed operations at night. This provided the police with a convenient excuse to make raids on any and all BPP offices, or members homes, under the pretext that they were looking for suspects, fugitives, weapons, and/or explosives. It also sucked the BPP into taking the un-winnable position of making stationary defenses of BPP offices. There should have been a clear separation between the above ground Party and the underground armed apparatus. Also small military forces should never adopt, as a general tactic, the position of making stationary defenses of offices, homes, buildings, etc.

3) Rhetoric Outstripped Capabilities: Although the BPP was adept at the art of propaganda and made very good use of its own and the establishment's media, still too many Panthers fell into the habit of making boisterous claims in the public media, or selling "wolf tickets" that they couldn't back up. Eventually, they weren't taken seriously anymore. The press, some of whom were police agents, often had only to stick a microphone under a Panther's nose to make him or her begin spouting rhetoric. This often played into the hands of those who were simply looking for slanderous material to air or to provide possible intelligence information to the police.

4) Lumpen Tendencies: It can be safely said that the largest segment of the New York City BPP membership (and probably nationwide) were workers who held everyday jobs. Other segments of the membership were semi-proletariat, students, youths, and lumpen-proletariat. The lumpen tendencies within some members were what the establishment's media (and some party members) played-up the most. Lumpen tendencies are associated with lack of discipline, liberal use of alcohol, marijuana, and curse-words; loose sexual morals, a criminal mentality, and rash actions. These tendencies in some Party members provided the media with better opportunities than they would otherwise have had to play up this aspect, and to slander the Party, which diverted public attention from much of the positive work done by the BPP.

5) Dogmatism: Early successes made some Panthers feel that they were the only possessors of absolute truths. Some became arrogant and dogmatic in their dealings with Party members, other organizations, and even the community. This turned people off.

6) Failure to Organize Economic Foundations in Community: The BPP preached socialist politics. They were anti-capitalist and this skewered their concept of building economic foundations in the community. They often gave the impression that to engage in any business enterprise was to engage in capitalism and they too frequently looked with disdain upon the small-business people in the community. As a result the BPP built few businesses which generated income other than the Black Panther newspaper, or which could provide self-employment to its membership and to people in the community. The BPP failed to encourage the Black community to set up its own

businesses as a means of building an independent economic foundation which could help break "outsiders" control of the Black community's economics, and move it toward economic self-reliance.

7) TV Mentality: The 60's were times of great flux. A significant segment of the U.S. population engaged in mass struggle. The Black Liberation, Native American, Puerto Rican, Asian, Chicano, Anti-War, White Revolutionary, and Woman's Liberation Movements were all occurring more or less simultaneously during this era. It appears that this sizable flux caused some Panthers to think that a seizure of state power was imminent or that a revolutionary struggle is like a quick paced TV program. That is, it comes on at 9 p.m., builds to a crescendo by 9:45, and by 9:55 — Victory!; all in time to make the 10 O'clock News. When it didn't happen after a few years, that is, Afrikans in the U.S. still were not free, no revolution occurred, and worse, the BPP was everywhere on the defensive, taking losses and riddled with dissension, many members became demoralized, disillusioned, and walked away or went back to old lifestyles. They were not psychologically prepared for a long struggle. In hindsight it appears that the BPP didn't do enough to root out this TV mentality in some members, but did in others, which is an aspect to ponder on.

Although the BPP made serious errors, it also gained a considerable measure of success and made several significant new contributions to the BLM. The final judgment of history may very well show that in its own way the BPP added the final ingredient to the Black Agenda necessary to attain real freedom: armed struggle; and that this was the great turning point which ultimately set the Black Liberation Movement on the final road to victory.

Marion Penitentiary, 4/2/85

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\* When Sundiata used the phrase, "Black Liberation Movement," we think he meant it in its' most progressive & revolutionary sense, i.e., a movement struggling for the independence of Afrikans here in the US. Check out his Some Solutions: Or Things To Do; Also see Vita Wa Watu, Book 8 for more on this discussion.



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# CROSSROAD

VOL. 10, #1 Oct-Dec 2001

An Open Letter To The Congressional Black Caucus

S.T.A.C. (Stop Targeting the Afrikan Community) is outraged but not surprised at the sudden laryngitis the majority of you came down with when it came to voting against giving George Dubya unbridled powers! The Afrikan Communities across this kountry wholeheartedly support and will protect our brave and principled Sista, Barbara Lee. The members of this organization [the CBC] have shown time and time again how unprincipled and entrenched the mentality of the house knee-grow is. When Governor Whitman of New Jersey increased the bounty on Assata Shakur and petitioned the Pope to convince President Castro to return Assata, once again the members of this organization stood on the sideline with laryngitis.

The members of this organization have participated in and voted for the Crack-Cocaine Law as well as the Effective Death Penalty Act and many more laws that are detrimental to the Afrikan communities and other communities of color. When the "Dark Alliance" [story] broke, Maxine Waters jumped out front selling wolf tickets saying "This Is It, I have no other issue, This Is It". Along with other opportunistic knee-grows Waters also introduced legislation to rescind the Crack-Cocaine law without any provision making it retroactive; this is no more than symbolism without substance. This is a contradiction, if she truly believed the "Dark Alliance" report.

We (S.T.A.C. & other organizations) have tried to no avail to get this organization to hold hearings on "COINTELPRO". There are hundreds of Sistas and Brothas that remain in prison today who survived the terrorist operation of "COINTELPRO", yet members of this organization vote in favor of bombing some unknown so-called terrorists? i'm sure many of you will go along with and vote for the Homeland Security Office that is in place, which We believe will be more vicious than COINTELPRO ever was or ever will be. While politicians position themselves in open forums and campaign trails to hear only what they want to hear, there is a grassroots movement across this kountry that is organizing, challenging and exposing you knee-grow politicians on every level.

We are not interested in your past records, that's all well and good, that is what you were supposed to do and continue to do. The problem begins when those of you elected by the people no longer operate in the best interests of the people who put [you] in there, then you must be removed from office. Many of you supported Bill "Bubba" Clinton unconditionally, when under his administration the Effective Death Penalty Act was implemented, which speeds up the process to murder prisoners on death-row. Under the Clinton administration the prison population [increased by more than] 600,000; of that number some 170,000 went into federal prisons. Our brotha Mumia Abu-Jamal is fighting for his life, and again members of this organization have laryngitis.

Mr. Jamal's prior attorneys refused to submit evidence of Mr. Jamal's innocence, which includes the confession of Arnold Beverly saying he was hired to murder Officer Faulkner, yet Mr. Jamal remains on death-row. Rachel Wolkenstein's declaration of August 7, 2001 reveals evidence of Mr. Jamal's innocence, if any of you care to read it. From your actions, none of you are outraged at the low-level terrorism that Afrikan people live through on a daily basis in our communities here in the US. We experience police brutality, continued 4th amendment rights violations (racial profiling) and prosecutorial misconduct by a criminal system sanctioned by each of you.

Again, our hats are off to Representative Barbara Lee for being that which her people needed her to be at such a critical time in history. i hate to think where We would be as a people if Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X, Dr. King, Marcus Garvey and many other righteous ancestors were as unprincipled as the members of this organization. i will leave you with an West Afrikan proverb pertaining to justice, *"The person who has been a slave from birth does not value rebellion".*



In Struggle,  
Shiriki Uganisha, Chairperson (S.T.A.C.)



## On Transitions: Dimensional Liberties

i was asked by a rad to develop a piece on ones re-entry into babylon after a stint in the camps. i came straight out of the SHU's of Corcoran and Pelican Bay, so my perspective will flow only along the lines of things i know, have experienced and overstand. Hopefully these brief notes will be of some help.

The first thing to be vigilant about is ones "circle of reality". That is to say that while We anguish in the wicked throes of the kamp system, We often set our "circle of reality" to the present frequency We reside in. An environment totally dominated by male energy that is most often vibrating at an ill pace. A sort of collective sickness seems to descend on the captive population; one that is conducive only to an atmosphere of hostility. You in your studies ain't exempt from this. For whatever you are reading is corresponding to your circumstances and your vibration(energy), which is being manipulated by forces that are stronger than you. Not in any physical sense, but rather in a reactive sort of way. Which is to say that, if something goes down that is "racial" one tends to leap first and do an investigation later. With consciousness comes responsibility. One must never, ever lose sight of the objective. Nevertheless, We sometimes fail to adjust Our "circle of reality" when We are let loose. And the tragic consequences of this is that We find Ourselves stranded in disillusion, confusion and anger. And like a nuclear reactor, We go into "melt down", in some cases taking down innocents in the process.

To adjust ones "circle of reality" is as simple as overstanding that your filter(or belief window) thru which everything you attempt to comprehend passes, needs new and more practical applications, or definitions to the reality you are experiencing. By that i mean, simply, that your playing field/battle field has all of a sudden been expanded tremendously. And as such, you must equate other elements of your new existence into your daily socialization. Often this becomes a source of overload for the average prisoner after having been in a virtual crypt, in solitude, for years. One must make the necessary adjustments based on the new reality of being at liberty to do something as small as taking out the trash or retrieving a letter from the post man without it having passed thru the hands of ten pigs.

One must reach out to those who still support you and build among them a support network. For you'd be surprized who knows someone, who knows someone that could "hook you up" with some employment. All the while you have to maintain a regimented schedule of action and good deeds that strengthen character and build resolution. Things like walking thru your area meeting people. Especially workers, students, gays, and lesbians. People are everywhere. Get involved with some Movement activity. We in the NAIM have no shortage of issues to be tended to. Personally, i try to plug into the nearest Afrikan Student Union on the nearest campus and start building on ideas that they usually have or are struggling with. One must enter a conscious social pool; aside and beyond your support network of unconscious citizens, you must, or need to be plugged into direct Movement data. One can easily fall right out of the loop if one is not in some form of contact with someone. Thus you must network.

The biggest issue here, at hand, is ones adjustment of the "circle of reality" to fit the current reality one is dropped into. A lot of times cats be "uptight" because they feel no one on the streets is "pushing a hard line", or "defending the people". After every news broadcast, where a New Afrikan or a Puerto Rican has been shot by the pigs, the "avengers" come out talking 'bout what they'd do if they were out. And as soon as he(or she) gets out they become disillusioned, angry, distanced and finally out of a misconceived notion, from a bad quote taken out of context, flies into a military tirade on two pigs. The pigs both live, but the rad is now captured because he failed to overstand the scope of changes that must be made in order to not lose sight of the objective. We can't win if We can't survive as an Org or Movement. There can be no conceptual continuity without Us to pass it on. Small units and individual fighters will become stranded without the support of the people. One will realize this if one is critical. Sometimes, as with myself, it took a few falls in the pit to gain the overstanding in the wit. But always, against all odds, get up. If youve fallen down, get up. Don't wallow in it (your sorrow, shame whatever), get up and begin again.

We are on the right path. It will manifest if We stay true to Our objectives. i can add nothing else to this piece so i'll end it. Stay up, stand firm and push forward.

Re-Build!  
Sanyika Shakur



THOUGHTS ON WHAT WE ARE BECOMING:  
A DISCUSSION PAPER

Part Two

"...black people in the North as early as the 1830s and 40s and perhaps as late as the 1850s, went through periods during which forces of integration and black nationalism (though these terms were not used until much later), grappled on a major scale for authority within black communities.... Not infrequently this **battle between contending world views** was played out under cover of arguments over what people of color should call themselves...the struggle over names being a surface manifestation of **fundamental ideological differences**...." (1) (my emphasis)

1. Part One [CROSSROAD, 9#2] opened this discussion by calling into question terms and concepts that We use to identify ourselves, and We should review three points made there:

1) Our present identity isn't static, but is "in motion and evolving, influencing and being influenced by all social phenomena."

2) "As We struggle as a people for resolution of our problems, We need an identity that distinguishes us from the forces of evil, which symbolizes our need to move beyond the boundaries of U.S. political-economic structures and its bourgeois/capitalist values and morality. Our **evolving** identity must inform our new politics and the new socio-economic structure that We need in order to realize ourselves as a New People."

3) "Identities based on so-called 'race' or skin pigmentation are increasingly inadequate and are fading away. Identities based upon nationality are better, but these, too, will lack and fade if the nations that We claim don't abandon and challenge patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism." (2)

2. Here, in Part Two, i focus the discussion upon: 1) the context within which all issues confronting us occur, with particular emphasis upon the "name debates," the development and change in the form of our collective identity. That context is the loss of our independence and the struggle of our people to regain our freedom. Ours is a struggle against the forces of capitalism, in all of its forms, i.e., colonialism and neocolonialism, and what i call post-neocolonialism (post-1968)-settler-imperialism, as uniquely developed and practiced inside what's called the U.S. of A.; 2) the occurrence of "name debates" as instances of class struggle, through which ever-rising pseudo-bourgeois and pettybourgeois forces struggle to gain ideological and political leadership over our people, and to strengthen their role as intermediary between the people and "America" and its rulers -- each "name debate" also reflecting changes in the structural relation (forms of control and exploitation) between our people and the oppressive state; 3) factors underlying name debates and the development of identity are dynamic and primarily material (political, economic, socio-cultural), and manifest themselves through the interests of the class forces engaged in the debates (i.e., the "masses" versus the "elites" -- and their colonial masters); 4) the struggle over "names" and identity is, at bottom, a struggle for a new, anti-capitalist, people-centered ("humanist") socioeconomic order.

3. The passage from Stuckey's **Ideological Origins** that i opened with, throws light on the context within which "name debates" occur, and implies the factors underlying changes in identity, or, the basis and role of identity with particular reference to the process of modern national and social revolution.

It's very important that We keep this context foremost in mind, and that We adopt a critical approach as We re-view it, and re-interpret it. For example, an approach toward the terms and concepts "integration" and "nationalism" must, first of all, understand them not as different tactical alternatives available within a single strategic vision. They are opposing concepts, fundamentally different ideologies, resting on antagonistic interpretations of our reality, and determination of objectives.



Even Webster's definition of "ideology" and "identity" will serve to help make the point. We'd find that "ideology" is a set of beliefs, assertions, theories, aims, characteristics of a group (people) or culture, that serve to define physical, social, mental and spiritual reality. We'd find that "identity" is a sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality -- a relation established by psychological identification.

It's generally understood that "integration" is a rejection of "nationalism," but it's only the rejection of one nationalism, and the acceptance of another. When We refer to people as "integrationists" We're saying that they embrace the ideology of the "dominant society," (i.e., "white nationalism" or "American nationalism" or capitalism and imperialism), while rejecting the ideology of, say, "black nationalism" (i.e., anti-capitalist, and socialist).

We tend to be unmindful of the fact that "nationalism" is about ideology and politics, not color. When We refer to people as "nationalists," We're saying that they have, or are shaping, an ideology and a particular set of social relations. We tend to use the term or phrase "black nationalism" the way We'd ordinarily refer to, say, Angolan or Russian, Chinese or Tanzanian nationalism...Vietnamese or Cuban, Zambian or Algerian nationalism. That is, We use the term "black" to designate a nationality, a people, a country or nation -- We need another term.

We continue to use "black" rather than, say, "New Afrikan" or "Maroonian", because We use the ideological framework of the oppressive society to evaluate ourselves -- even when the evaluation is done by "radical" or "leftist" scholars and activists. That framework becomes "assimilationist" or "integrationist," and ignores or downplays the existence of the opposing "nationalist" ideology and socialist strivings of Afrikans within U.S. borders, obscuring our attempt to preserve and develop a national identity, and to chart a political course that opposes capitalism and (post-)neocolonialism.

These were the concepts and processes that were in play in the 1830s, 40s and 50s -- that have been in play since We were 'taken out of our own history' -- but were unnamed or known by other names, until the use of the terms "integration" and "nationalism".

4. Keeping context in mind, as We move through the process, also means focusing on content over form -- the content of, "nationalism," ideology, identity -- and the tools used. That is, ideology is a set of beliefs about our social reality, but We also use philosophy as a means of determining and interpreting reality. That is, for example, "integrationists" and "nationalists" -- if they truly have opposing ideologies - will consequently also have opposing philosophical frameworks, i.e., the former will probably be some form of idealism, and the latter some form of materialism.

Our collective identity, our sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality, and our relation established by psychological identification, has to rest on a shared understanding of how the world works, of how We determine what's real and what's not real, what's a necessary objective and means to use to reach that objective, and what ain't. In fact, merely raising the point that We must be more cognizant of our philosophical base makes it an element of the identity under development and pushes it to the forefront of the issues to be addressed by the people as a whole, while also making it concrete and immediate, not abstract or remote.

Above all, keeping context in mind means that We continue to debate our collective identity because We're still an oppressed people -- We lost our freedom, and We're engaged in struggle to regain our freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*

"...in colonialism and in neo-colonialism the essential characteristic of imperialist domination remains the same: the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces...."



"...the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected...."

"...the principal aspect of national liberation struggle is the struggle against neo-colonialism...." (3)

5. What We struggle **against** informs what We struggle **for**. It would seem a rather simple process, but a look back over the past several hundred years -- even a casual observation of our present situation -- tells us that it's not. What are We really struggling against? "Racism"? What are We really struggling for? "Equality"?

If We say We're struggling for "freedom," then We have to know when, how, and why We lost our freedom. Most importantly, **We have to know exactly what it was that We lost!** If We're struggling for "equality," then what was the form and the content of the "equality" that We lost?

Let's gain some understanding of phrases like "negation of the historical process," "usurpation of the freedom of development of the national productive forces," "historical personality" and "return to history." We have to know, in essence, what "history" is, what it means to be "taken out" of it and have it "arrested" by colonialism -- no matter the form of that colonialism.

Let's learn about "productive forces" but understand that their principal element is **people**. We were **peoples** with our own nations and states, our own social/class structures and conflicts. We had our own histories, and We made our history as We, say, gave life to our children and as We developed our economies and managed our commerce. Our historical process was the self-determined pursuit of our aims and our active participation in every component of our social process. OUR historical personality was our individual and collective identity, at any point of development. The conduct of "name debates" should involve discussion of the form and content of the "freedom" that We lost, and of the freedom that We seek.

6. The context and process of our "name debates" on these shores had their effective point of origin at the onset of the oppressive relation -- the moment that We were captured, sold, placed into pens and dungeons and aboard ships bound West. The context and process evolved as We set foot on these shores. All of this constituted an assault upon our freedom, our history and humanity, and upon our identity.

(Do you recall the scene in the movie *Roots* -- We're inside the ship and the brother says: Talk to the Sister or Brother next to you. Learn their language; teach them your language. We must become one people!)

We didn't land on these shores with a collective identity as "slaves," "negroes," "blacks," -- not even as "Africans." We arrived here as, say, Wolof, Ibo, or Fula. However, We had already begun to change, to develop an identity as a new people.

We initially called ourselves "Africans," but underneath it all We knew (then, better than most of us know now), that We were "new" Africans -- a new people, forged through our collective oppression, by an emerging capitalism and a unique form of settler-colonialism.

We called ourselves "Africans" not solely nor even primarily to maintain a link with a "place". Being "Africans" gave us a new status, a new dignity, a new identity as human beings with a way of life clearly separate and distinct from that of the oppressor. It reminded us of the type of freedom from which We'd been "usurped," and which We sought to regain under a new set of conditions (e.g., "Maroons").

We became "Africans," but soon, some among us wanted to be other than what We were -- "negro," "colored," "American" -- anything but "African" or New Afrikan. These some no longer wanted to identify with the majority of the people and our interests; they no longer wanted to maintain a united opposition to the oppressive social order, while seeking to regain lost independence. Instead, these some opted for "inclusion" and "equality" **as defined by the oppressor!** These some were the embryonic "native elite" among us, and on these shores -- the emerging pseudo-bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, whose successors were among those who, in the late 1980s, called for a new term by which to identify us, by way of renegotiating the terms of rule previously agreed to by them and their colonial masters.



Point: We don't have to start in the 1830s to begin analyses of "name debates," class formation and class struggle among New Afrikan people inside U.S. borders.

The first thing to remember, here, is that We were not torn from classless societies, and therefore not unfamiliar with class struggle. So, it's easier than most imagine to go back to the 1630s, the 1730s, to uncover the extent to which We've debated what We should call ourselves, and the struggle to shape a new identity on these shores. All of this was a natural consequence of **being human, having history and culture**, resisting oppression, and fighting to regain our independence -- as a people -- on these shores.

7. The 1830s, 40s and 50s weren't the first, nor the last periods during which We waged class struggle under cover of debates over what to call ourselves. Most people over 30 years of age will recall the debate in the 1960s over "negro" and "black," while people under 30 may best recall the debate in the late 1980s over "black" and "African-American".

**Few of us, however, understand these debates as forms of class struggle among the people, which also mark changes in the developmental and structural form of our collective oppression.** For example: The move from, say, Ibo to "slave," represents a transition from independence to dependence; from "slave" to "African" represents the formation of a new people, our resistance to colonial domination, and our struggle to regain independence in a new setting; from "African" to "colored" or "negro" represents a transition from a predominantly horizontal internal social/class structure and "colonial model" of relations with the U.S., to the greater development of a vertical social/class structure, a "neocolonial model"; from "negro" to "black" represents a transition to an anti-colonial struggle -- the failure of that struggle led us to the transition from "black" to "African-American" -- the development of what I call "post-neocolonialism," wherein what was perceived as a "purely nationalist" objective is now perceived as a "revolutionary nationalist" one -- but it's a move "beyond nationalism" and toward a new type of humanist, socialist, society.

It won't hurt to re-state the point: "Name debates" occur periodically because they reflect our effort to resolve the fundamental contradiction between ourselves and the U.S. settler-imperialist state.

We lost our "original" identities, and their corresponding socioeconomic formations (i.e., states and nations) when We lost our freedom. We shaped a new identity in the process of collective oppression, and resistance. **We will continue to conduct "name debates" until We regain our freedom** and, consequently, shape yet another identity. The new identity that We're now shaping will be characterized not by color, nor by a place, but by a set of political, economic and socio-cultural behaviors and values, new philosophy and ideology.

8. The most recent "name debate" occurred in the late 1980s, and was marked by a 1988 "Call" issued by Ramona Edelin, of the National Urban Coalition, and Jesse Jackson. On the surface, they sought to have the term "African American" recognized as "official" (re: the U.S.) and as the "reference of choice" (re: the people). Under cover of that debate, pseudo-bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces were placing themselves in position to play new or modified roles as "compradors" and "partners" in the new world order of global capitalism, under U.S. leadership.

A **Chicago Defender** editorial on the debate pointed out that on the surface, the concern over what We should be called may have seemed meaningless, and draw attention away from more pressing concerns such as drug abuse, family disintegration, and economic under-development. The editorial noted, however, that such concerns have a common root, "lost, misplaced, or confused identity."

(The late 1980s was, looking back, a transitional period in the development of U.S. imperialism abroad, and its "structural adjustment" (Thanks, Marilyn) inside the borders, and with particular attention to New Afrikan people. To the New Afrikan bourgeois forces, the name debate symbolized an "arrival". The structural adjustment in issue, between the U.S. and New Afrikan people, began in the late 1960s, marked especially by the events of 1968 and the final recommendations-of the Kerner Commission.



(The Kerner Commission was, for us, like the commission the British sent into Kenya after the Kenyan people and their Land and Freedom Army struck for their independence, and Kenyatta was set up as President, and not Odinga. Inside the U.S., the 1960s had seen the rise of a violent mass-based resistance that was not only "nationalist" ("It's Nation Time!"), but "revolutionary" (the people were calling the capitalist system into question, and beginning to discuss socialist options). The Kerner Commission was charged with determining 'What happened? Why did it happen? How to prevent it from happening again?' In essence, they recommended that New Afrikans must be made to think that they were, or could become, "Americans." At the top of the list of measures proposed to help bring this about was the "expansion of the negro/black middle class."

(Of course, in order to make New Afrikans feel "American," all of America's major institutions had to extend themselves toward New Afrikans, "include" them and treat them more "fairly." As a consequence, however, of these adjustments by American institutions as they promoted **their** nationalism, the national consciousness of New Afrikans had to be undermined, and the institutions of New Afrikan people -- colleges, hospitals, banks and insurance companies, community-based small business etc., -- had to be "integrated," or destroyed.)

(Check: Brothers stood at the 1968 Olympics with raised fists. At the 1972 Olympics, George Foreman ran around the ring waving an American flag! No wonder he was scorned in Zaire and is still loved by America.)

9. We've seen some of the background for the 1988 "Call," but it was also prepared by the conduct of ideo-theoretical struggle among the people. Therefore, before We discuss the 1980s debate, We have to first touch upon a speech delivered by Ron Karenga, which will necessarily take us through Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, and a bit of their contributions to the discourse on the basis, role, and objective of identity in the struggles of oppressed peoples. (4)

We must start with Karenga's speech because it contains ideotheoretical propositions which were at the center of the 1980s debate, e.g., premises and phrases used by those urging the use of "African-American" during the debate seemed to have come straight from the mouth of Karenga (altho they could have come from the mouths or pens of any number of petty-bourgeois intellectuals). However, the premises used by Karenga were "borrowed" from Frantz Fanon, and Amilcar Cabral.

On February 15, 1985, Karenga addressed an audience in St. Louis, Missouri, and his presentation included a discussion of identity. As his point of departure, he claimed that Frantz Fanon had urged oppressed peoples to ask themselves "three fundamental questions: 1) Who am I?; 2) Am I really who I am?; 3) Am I all I ought to be?"

According to Karenga (and Fanon?), oppressed peoples must ask these questions of themselves in order to determine their relation to (world) history, which, he said, manifests itself through Values (because they inform what We're committed to, and they dictate our possibilities), and National Culture (because it's self-conscious, and collective: "We are what We do; our practice identifies us and makes us.").

To emphasize the importance of our need to understand our relation to it, Karenga made the following four points on the role of history:

1) It's the basis of identity. However, in light of the three questions cited above, and the following three points, it seemed strange to me that Karenga then, very matter-of-factly, stated that "We are African-Americans," and that this was so **because** (and here he borrowed from Cabral, but without attribution) "identity is based on **historical origin** and **social location**...where you came from and where you are now -- Africans in America, or African-Americans." (my emphasis)

2) It "tells you who you are in relation to your possibilities...by what you've done, and can do again."



3) It helps us to pinpoint and to understand "where things are tending."

4) It helps us to discern "a development pattern, and it says **We're not what We are**, but what We're **becoming**...If all you are is what you are now, you're actually dead." (my emphasis)

10. Can you see my problem with this? Well, let's go to the first point made about the role of history.

Karenga says history establishes the basis for identity -- and, as if to illustrate the point, he says, We "are" African-Americans. That's right, you say? Well, what about the three questions that We started with: Who am i? Am i really who i am? Am i all i ought to be?

After you deal with those questions for a while, consider the other three points made on the role of history, i.e., in relation to our possibilities; in relation to where things are tending; in relation to his statement that "We're **not** what We **are** -- but what We're **becoming** -- If all you are is what you are **now**, you're actually dead." Because everything changes.

Well, maybe everything changes except Karenga's perception that We "are" Americans. "History" is dynamic; dynamism runs through each of the three questions and each of the four points on the role of history. It's only that line "We **are** African-Americans" that's static.... Karenga could have qualified that statement, but i contend that it was deliberately made, and served as the linch-pin in a strategy by bourgeois forces to pose as "leadership" of "Africans in America," as they helped the U.S. to, for example, spearhead a new phase of economic exploitation of the African continent. But i stray....

11. Karenga says "We **are** African-Americans" -- **Why** are We? He says it's because our identity is based on "historical origin" and "social location" -- again, concepts borrowed from Amilcar Cabral, and too loosely adapted and inappropriately applied (misinterpreted and misused).

Is it really that simple -- that We must be "African-Americans" because of where We came from and where We are now? Does being in this place actually, or alone, make us "Americans"?

No, it's not that simple, and only in part because "America" is not just a "place". "America," as We now know it, is a culture, an ideology, a specific way of organizing production, of distribution and exchange of goods and services. "Americans" pledge allegiance to the political and other social demands and expectations of "American" nationality, and bourgeois/capitalist, anti-humanist values.

However, assuming that We are, now, "African-Americans" -- will this or must this always be the case? What about those "possibilities" -- are We to pursue them as "African-Americans"? Can this pursuit be done within the boundaries of what We now know to be "American" values and culture, "American" nationality and identity? What about "where things are tending." inside these borders and throughout the world? What about the "development pattern" which tells us, among other things, that We aren't what We are, but what We're becoming? "If all you are is what you are now, you're actually dead."

12. We can't stop at "African-American," just as We couldn't stop at "slave," "colored," "negro," or "black". We haven't completed the process -- from independence, to independence. Who We **ought** to be is determined in the process of struggle to end our oppression and exploitation, and to build a new type of society -- where We are now, and throughout the world, for ourselves and for all peoples. It has to be a society unlike the "America" that We now know, free of capitalism, racism, sexism and homophobia.

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Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?" (5)



13. Karenga remained a bit more faithful to Fanon than he did to Cabral. Fanon says that the question is asked because **colonialism** negates the other "person" and denies oppressed peoples all attributes of humanity. (It would be necessary to treat "humanity" as i suggested treating "history," above, i.e., what is it? What are its "attributes"? What's the relation to "identity"? Both relate to the capacity for self-realization, social behaviors, sets of characteristics which, while "universal," distinguish one people from another when their concrete, particular social processes are examined.)

Essentially, Fanon means by "humanity" and its "attributes" the same as Cabral when he refers to the "historical process" and the "historical personality." What Fanon **doesn't** mean is that peoples dominated by colonialism must ask themselves "Who am I?" because of some meta-physical "where you are now"....

The people have been "dehumanized" by colonialism, and in order to regain their humanity they must combat and destroy colonialism, and re-establish their identity as a sovereign people.

In this sense, "regaining humanity" doesn't mean that We must "be like" those who oppress us (because they've told us and made some of us believe that they're human, and We're not). We don't want an "equal opportunity" to plunder the world and ravage its peoples. "Regaining humanity" also doesn't mean that We somehow return to the past and adopt an identity for which conditions no longer exist -- there's no going back, only forward and upward development.

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men [people], and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men [people]. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the "thing" which has been colonized becomes man [new people] during the same process by which it frees itself. (6)

14. Here is Fanon, and he's talking about the fundamental character and objective of decolonization or, as We call it, the "freedom movement." Decolonization/the freedom movement is the process through which the people answer the question "Who am I?" and shape a **new** identity.

Fanon's **The Wretched Of The Earth** is, taken as a whole, about the struggles of oppressed peoples as they shape a **new** identity. Most readers of *Wretched* come away without making the connections, and say that the book is about narrow perceptions of anti-colonialism or antiracism, or the need for oppressed peoples to use "violence" (narrowly conceived) in their struggles against oppression. i say that all of these, and the process of shaping a new identity, are one and the same.

You've just read Fanon, who said that the struggle against colonialism "influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally." The struggle against colonialism is the veritable creation of new people -- the creation of a new identity for peoples oppressed and exploited by **capitalism**.

We all become "new" during the same process by which We free ourselves from **capitalism** -- We are the "thing" that has been colonized and created by colonialism -- no matter whether We're called "slaves" or "natives," "coloreds" or "negroes," "blacks" or "African-Americans"....

...[T]his struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between [people] cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people's culture. After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism, but also the disappearance of the colonized [people].

This **new** humanity cannot do otherwise than define a **new** humanism both for itself and for others. It is prefigured in the objectives and the methods of conflict.... (7) (my emphasis)



15. It's no surprise, then, that reading Fanon, re: "Who am I?" is like reading DuBois: "Here, then, is the dilemma...What, after all, am I? Am I an American or a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American?" (8)

This is a classic expression of the "dilemma" of the petty-bourgeoisie. They need **an** identity, but they're torn between the identity held by their people, and the identity of the oppressor, which is denied to them. They serve the oppressor by helping to preserve the "dehumanized" identity of the people, and for this they are promoted as "leaders" of the people by colonialism.

"Negro" in the above context is clearly not a "race" or a "color" but an ideology, a politics, a consciousness of nationality. DuBois voiced the recognition of the negation of the historical personality of New Afrikan people, and he was confronted with a choice between identities and world views. Should he fight or acquiesce? Should he choose capitalism, or socialism -- **that's** the essence of the "dilemma"!

Looking at it from another angle: "...the settler is right when he speaks of knowing 'them' well. For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system." (9)

The "negro" and the "American" are products of colonialism. "Natives," "slaves," "blacks," "African-Americans" -- all are products of colonialism. (Even "whiteness" and "blackness" are products, two sides of a single binary construction of colonialism.) Any alleged choice between "negro" and "American" is false, because both serve to reproduce the exploitative, dehumanizing situation.

16. We should study Fanon's *Wretched* to learn, among other things, that for Fanon (and contrary to Karenga and the petty-bourgeoisie), "history" doesn't serve as the basis for identity because of some simplistic "where you came from and where you are now". Throughout *Wretched*, Fanon painstakingly describes the stages through which the people *evolve*, as their struggle against colonialism advances from lower to higher stages. Fanon emphasizes the struggles between the classes of oppressed peoples, explains why internal class struggle is a prerequisite for real independence and social revolution, and **why the "masses" must lead the struggle**. Fanon repeatedly emphasizes the need for political and social consciousness -- "intellectual development" -- for the mass of the people, characterized by a revolutionary class stand.

For Fanon, (the new) identity isn't based on some shallow "historical origin" and "social location," because "the struggle no longer concerns the place where you are, but the place where you are going." (10) The (new) identity emerges through a dynamic process of struggle to create a new society, as the people fight to become ex-"slaves," ex-"negroes," ex-"coloreds," ex-"blacks," ex-"African-Americans," and to **"find their nationality in the implacable struggle which opposes socialism and capitalism."** (11) (my emphasis)

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"...the need not to confuse the **original identity**, of which the biological element is the main determinant, and the **actual identity**, of which the main determinant is the sociological element." (12)

17. i'm not surprised that Karenga made no direct reference to Amilcar Cabral and his "Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle," from which Karenga unfaithfully adapted the terms "historical origin" and "social location." Had he done so, one would readily see the conceptual and political discrepancies between the two sets of terms.

Cabral held that, even under colonial oppression, the masses maintain their identity, and that it rests on the characteristics held in common by them -- characteristics which distinguish them from the oppressive system. These characteristics arise through historical factors which Cabral designates as "biological" and "sociological," each of which represents forms of identity, "original" and "actual," respectively. Karenga's "historical origin" is an adaptation of Cabral's biological element/**original identity**, and Karenga's "social location" is an adaptation of Cabral's sociological element/**actual identity**.



For Cabral, neither form of identity (original or actual) is fixed or immutable, because the biological and sociological elements that define them are in constant motion -- change.

The biological element (inherited genetics) is the physical basis of the existence and growth of identity, and the sociological element gives identity "objective substance by giving content and form, and allowing confrontation and comparison between individuals and between groups...."

"This shows on the one hand the supremacy of the social over the individual condition, for society... is a higher form of life. It shows on the other hand the need not to confuse, the **original identity**, of which the biological element is the main determinant, and the **actual identity**, of which the main determinant is the sociological element. Clearly, the identity of which one must take account at a given moment of the growth of a being (individual or collective) is the actual identity, and, awareness of that being, reached only on the basis of... Original identity, is incomplete, partial and false, for it leaves out or does not comprehend the decisive influence of social conditions on the content and form of identity." (13)

The "social conditions" that serve as the dynamic determinants in the evolution and role of identity, arise from economic, political, social and cultural aspects characteristic of the growth and "history" of the individual or collective in question.

18. It has to be understood that no correspondence exists, or can exist between Karenga's "historical origin" and "social location," and Cabral's "original identity" and "actual identity," unless, first, the dynamic character is present in the former set of terms. Second, emphasis must be properly given to the role of sociological factors, and actual identity. For us (this applies to the biological element in ways that it doesn't necessarily apply to peoples not subject to our unique form of oppression), again: The Ibo or Fulani taken from their homes - their societies -- in the early 16th or 17th centuries did not remain Ibo or Fulani, as they resisted oppression in the late 16th or 17th centuries; nor were they, in the 17th, 18th, 19th or 20th centuries, Ibo or Fulani -- and nor were they "Americans". On one hand, their biological elements had changed. However, We especially can't ignore the decisive dynamic character of the "actual identity," the importance of the sociological element and social conditions on the content, form, and role of identity in the context of our struggle to regain independence and new social development. "Actual identity" ain't about some static, metaphysical conception of mere "location" -- it's about the characteristics that you share with your people and which give you an identity "separate and distinct" from that of your oppressor! And, these social conditions inform the context and goals of the struggle. In fact, identity is the position that you take with regard to the struggle!

19. Karenga's adaptations of Cabral's terms omit their full meaning and they don't contain their dynamic character. Karenga's terms denote fixed status. This immutable character, absent the full range of political relationships to questions of struggle, was the foundation upon which petty-bourgeois forces in the late 1980s rested their rationale for adoption of the term "African-American." In doing so, they demonstrated a general abandon of the need for the identity of the people to be distinct from that of the oppressor, and they failed to connect the question of identity to the concrete reality of the ongoing struggle for national and social revolution. As Fanon would put it, "their objective is not the radical overthrow of the system." (14)

The question of identity doesn't arise independent of struggle against oppression and for a new type of social order; it doesn't arise independent of struggle between the classes of the people, because some class forces are in league with the people's enemy. If Karenga had referred us to Cabral and "Identity and Dignity" (which should be read and studied together with "National Liberation and Culture" and "The Weapon of Theory") (15), We'd have seen that the question of identity (and "name debates") is set within the context of struggle of a people against colonialist/capitalist oppression -- a people whose identity is shaped by that oppression.



20. Cabral's "Identity and Dignity" was set within the context of struggle -- one in which the mass of the people had maintained an identity distinct from that of their oppressor, because the people had never stopped resisting oppression, in all forms, and the basic elements of their culture and social structure had remained intact.

It was within this context that the question of identity arose, **with particular reference to the problems of a "return to the source" of that identity, by individuals from the petty-bourgeois class, "culturally uprooted, alienated or more or less assimilated."**

These petty-bourgeois individuals have allied themselves with the oppressor and sought to serve the interests of the oppressive state, as well as their own class interests: "...they live both materially and spiritually according to the foreign colonial structure. They seek to identify themselves with this culture both in their social behaviors and even in their appreciation of its values." (16)

The petty-bourgeoisie "assimilates the colonizer's mentality, considers itself culturally superior to its own people and ignores or looks down upon their cultural values. This situation, characteristic of the majority of colonized intellectuals, is consolidated by increases in the social privileges of...the group, with direct implications for the behavior of individuals in this group in relation to the liberation movement." (17)

However, they can't get past the barriers -- the "racial discrimination" -- thrown up by the system, or escape their role as a marginalized class. They begin to suffer a "frustration complex" which causes them to question their status, and to begin to struggle to regain identification with the mass of the people -- to regain an identity distinct from that of the oppressor:

The "return to the source" is therefore not a voluntary step, but the only possible reply to the demand of concrete need, historically determined, and enforced by the inescapable contradiction between the colonized society and the colonial power, the mass of the people exploited and the foreign exploitative class, a contradiction in the light of which each social stratum or indigenous class must define its position. (18)

Whether, and to what extent the "reconversion of minds" is genuine and effective is determined through practice and the choices made by individuals re: the goals and methods of daily struggle, i.e., the degree to which they oppose capitalism and pursue socialism in union with the masses, because the masses don't merely oppose the oppressive "culture," they oppose colonial domination as a whole.

Cabral's terms are thus seen as the necessary basis to define the characteristics of identity: the political, economic, social and cultural aspects which qualitatively distinguish the oppressed people from the colonial state. They illuminate the role of material forces and social practice in the shape and function of identity.

It is **the struggle** which "reflects the awareness or grasp of a complete identity," a grasp which is strengthened by the development of political awareness. (20)

The options before the petty-bourgeois individuals are more or less universal, and the masses have a need to maintain a vigilance over the class, because the petty-bourgeoisie has a tendency to assert the identity of the masses while pursuing their own class interests. (21)

21. As We move to "define our positions," We move beyond the frame of reference established by liberal and most so-called "left" interpretations of colonialist hegemony. That is, "assimilation" is in the interests of the colonizer; having the people believe that they are some sort of unequally treated "Americans" is in the interests of the colonizer; having the people define the nature of the problem as a struggle against mere "racism" is in the interests of the colonizer. "Assimilation" inside these borders really means acceptance of capitalist hegemony. To define the nature of the fundamental contradiction between our people and the U.S. as one against mere "racism" obscures the role of "racism" as a creation and tool of capitalism, and We end up struggling against "racism" but not against capitalism, and therefore, not struggling for real freedom.



A reconversion of minds -- of mental set-- is thus indispensable to the true integration of people into the liberation movement [which is] completed only during the course of the struggle, through daily contact with the popular masses in the communion of sacrifice required by the struggle. (22)

The greater the effectiveness of colonialism's policy of assimilation (in our case more effective since 1968 and the post-neocolonialist phase), and the more effective colonialism is in suppressing all forms of revolutionary resistance, the greater the need for **the whole people** to re-define their position, re-assert an identity, pursue the development of a revolutionary culture, and generally undergo a "reconversion of minds."

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22. The late 1980s thrust by the bourgeois forces for the term "African-American" was consolidated at a press conference held in Chicago in December of 1988. Called by Ramona Edelin and Jesse Jackson, it was attended by a number of academics, writers, activists, and business people.

Jesse Jackson, acting as spokesperson, articulated the explicit rationale for the Call -- a rationale that echoed Karenga:

We are fundamentally an African people, with the blood of two continents flowing through our bodies, thus giving us a sense of obligation and participation in the world community. (23)

It was somewhat revealing, and not coincidental, that Jackson made the above statement while in Zambia in February of 1989--manifesting the implicit rationale of the Call, and effectively serving as ambassador for the petty-bourgeoisie and U.S. interests in the penetration of African markets.

Also echoing Karenga, the rationale and interests were articulated somewhat differently by John Jacobs, of the Urban League: "All other ethnic groups in America connect their heritage to their mother country and where they are now." Jacobs further asserted that the proposed term "reflects the duality of all Americans -- their ethnic or religious identity, and their status as Americans. Only Blacks are identified by a term that is purely descriptive of a physical characteristic -- color. Our priorities have to reflect the drive for parity in all aspects of life...."

23. Here is that one-sided "biological element," now framed as an "ethnic pluralist" rationale for an assimilationist objective, which guarantees that thought and practice remain within the so-called "mainstream" of American ideology and politics, masking the real nature of the colonial phenomenon. It's a narrow "culturalist," bourgeois nationalist line, placing their class interests above and opposite to the line of the masses, which is based on the historic necessity to ground a distinct nationality through a social revolutionary process. The line of the masses **refutes** American ideology and politics, with all underlying assumptions and values; it seeks to establish a new politics and a new culture.

24. We should also note that when "black" is argued as 'purely descriptive of a physical characteristic,' as Jacob does, this, too, is incomplete, partial and false. It contains a bit of truth, and no doubt helps some imagine a sound basis for adoption of the new term (e.g., in February of 1989, it was claimed that the people supported adoption of the new term by "consensus.") Yet, a 1991 poll taken by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, indicated that 72 percent of the people preferred to be called "Black," while 15 percent preferred the term "African-American."

For a majority of the people, "black" is not a term that's "purely descriptive of a color" -- it's a term that they use to signify a politics, an ideology, a **consciousness** of distinct nationality -- a nationality that the assimilationist framework suppresses and obscures. However, when Prof. Michael Dawson and others



conducted the National Black Political Study (1993-1994), they found that half of the people surveyed characterized our status as "a nation within a nation," and that 14 percent (app. 4,200,000) wanted an independent "black" state.

25. The last "name debate," under the leadership of New Afrikan petty-bourgeois forces, placed form over content by concentrating the effort upon **what** We should be called -- and resting this on a narrow, one-sided premise -- rather than upon **why We have a continuing need to assert and re-assert an identity that satisfies our material and psychological needs -- as a people.**

Identity designates one's position with regard to the fundamental problems confronting the whole people, i.e., colonialism and capitalism. Our search for a collective identity is part of the process of our struggle to regain our freedom, and to build a socio-economic order that places people over profits.

— End of Part Two —

(o.y.y. -- 2-15-01)

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The  
New Afrikan Creed

1. i believe in the spirituality, humanity and genius of Black people, and in our new pursuit of these values.
2. i believe in the family and the community, and in the community as a family, and i will work to make this concept live.
3. i believe in the community as more important than the individual.
4. i believe in constant struggle for freedom, to end oppression and build a better world. i believe in collective struggle; in fashioning victory in concert with my brothers and sisters.
5. i believe that the fundamental reason our oppression continues is that We, as a people, lack the power to control our lives.
6. i believe that fundamental way to gain that power, and end oppression, is to build a sovereign Black nation.
7. i believe that all the land in America, upon which We have lived for a long time, which We have worked and built upon, and which We have fought to stay on, is land that belongs to us as a people.
8. i believe in the Malcolm X Doctrine: that We must organize upon this land, and hold a plebiscite, to tell the world by a vote that We are free and our land independent, and that, after the vote, We must stand ready to defend ourselves, establishing the nation beyond contradiction.
9. Therefore, i pledge to struggle without cease, until We have won sovereignty; i pledge to struggle without fail until We have built a better condition than the world has yet known.
10. i will give my life, if that is necessary; i will give my time, my mind, my strength, and my wealth because this IS necessary.
11. i will follow my chosen leaders and help them.
12. i will love my brothers and sisters as myself.
13. i will steal nothing from a brother or sister, cheat no brother or sister, misuse no brother or sister, inform on no brother or sister, and spread no gossip.
14. i will keep myself clean in body, dress and speech, knowing that i am a light set on a hill, a true representative of what We are building.
15. i will be patient and uplifting with the deaf, dumb and blind, and i will seek by word and deed to heal the Black family, to bring into the Movement and into the Community mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters left by the wayside.

Now, freely and of my own will, i pledge this Creed, for the sake of freedom for my people and a better world, on pain of disgrace and banishment if i prove false. For, i am no longer deaf, dumb or blind. i am, by inspiration of the ancestors and grace of the Creator — a New Afrikan.



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